

Message Text

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SUBJECT: MEETING OF HEADS OF STATE OF PANAMA, COSTA RICA AND
COLOMBIA

SUMMARY: AT PRESS CONFERENCE FOLLOWING THEIR MEETINGS, CHIEFS
OF STATE OF PANAMA, COLOMBIA AND COSTA RICA, WHO REPORTEDLY
DISCUSSED BANANA TAX AMONG OTHER PROBLEMS, ALL SPOKE OF SMALL
NATIONS' STRUGGLE AGAINST POWERFUL TRANSNATIONAL COMPANIES
AND THEY REAFFIRMED THEIR DETERMINATION TO ASSERT CONTROL OVER
THEIR ECONOMIC AS WELL AS JURIDICAL SEVEREIGNTY. END SUMMARY.

1. ON JUNE 7 AND 8, 1974, CHIEF OF GOVERNMENT GENERAL OMAR
TORRIJOS HERRERA MET WITH PRESIDENT DANIEL ODUBER OF COSTA
RICA AND PRESIDENT-ELECT ALFONSO LOPEZ MICHELSEN ON CONTADORA
ISLAND WHERE THEY REPORTEDLY DISCUSSED, AMONG VARIOUS TOPICS,
COMMERCIAL RELATIONS, COMPLETION OF THE INTER-AMERICAN HIGHWAY
THROUGH THE DARIEN AND THE RECENTLY IMPOSED BANANA TAX. HIGH-
LIGHTS TAKEN FROM PRESS REPORTS OF THE NEWS CONFERENCE FOLLOW
BELOW.

2. THE PRINCIPAL ACHIEVEMENT OF THE MEETING, ACCORDING
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TO THE PARTICIPANTS, WAS THE REAFFIRMATION OF THE FIRM DECI-

SION OF THE THREE COUNTRIES TO DEFEND THE SOVEREIGN RIGHT TO FREELY CONTROL THE PRICES AND MARKETING OF THEIR RAW MATERIALS. GENERAL TORRIJOS DECLARED THAT IT HAD BEEN DECIDED TO MAINTAIN "A SOLID AND COMPACT FRONT IN THE STRUGGLE TO OBTAIN BETTER BANANA PRICES AND THE CREATION OF THE UNION OF COUNTRIES EXPORTING THE FRUIT."

3. WITH REFERENCE TO ALLEGED PLOT AGAINST TORRIJOS AND GOVERNMENTS OF COSTA RICA AND HONDURAS, TORRIJOS ANNOUNCED AGREEMENT OF THE PARTICIPANTS ON THE COURSE OF ACTION TO BE FOLLOWED AND READINESS "TO CARRY INVESTIGATION TO THE END AND TO THE HIGHEST LEVELS."

4. ODUBER EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE MILLION DOLLAR CONTINGENCY FUND PROVIDED BY PANAMA SAYING "IT IS AN ACT OF REGIONAL SOLIDARITY UNCOMMON IN THE HISTORY OF LATIN AMERICA." HE STATED THAT THE TRANSNATIONAL COMPANIES WILL CONTINUE TRYING TO FORCE THE SITUATION IN ORDER TO AVOID PAYMENT OF THE BANANA EXPORT TAX, BUT AFTER THE FINAL WORD, THE COMPANIES WILL IN THE END PAY THE TAX. ODUBER SAID HE HOPED ECUADOR--THE BIGGEST BANANA EXPORTER IN LATIN AMERICA--WILL FIX A DATE TO CELEBRATE A MEETING OF ALL SEVEN BANANA COUNTRIES, POSSIBLY TO TAKE PLACE IN QUITO.

5. LOPEZ STATED THAT SOVEREIGNTY IN OUR PRESENT SOCIETY IS NOT ONLY JURIDICAL BUT ALSO AN ECONOMIC SOVEREIGNTY WHICH COUNTRIES MUST EXERCISE. HE ADDED THAT THIS SOVEREIGNTY IS OFTEN THREATENED--NOT SO MUCH BY OTHER STATES--BUT BY TRANSNATIONAL COMPANIES WHICH ARE MORE POWERFUL THAN THEIR OWN GOVERNMENTS.

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